



Disaster.

The past 12 months have seen their share – from tsunamis to hurricanes, and earthquakes to bombings, people around the world have been affected. And, people from around the world have responded.

Many countries are fortunate to have first responders and governmental agencies that deal with emergency management. Disasters do not have boundaries and have little regard for a country's sovereignty.

This year, six countries under NATO's Partnership for Peace program held disaster exercises running the gamut from natural to man made. One of the goals was to start a dialogue between countries with shared borders so in the event of a disaster they can offer aid to one another as a sign of goodwill and cooperation, but most importantly save lives.

are all part of the Civil Military Emergency Preparedness program, which is managed by the Europe District's International Engineering Center in Wiesbaden, Germany.

Each year the CMEP program sees more success. As the countries get more familiar with the process of emergency response and giving and receiving aid, the exercise scenarios get more complex.

One such exercise took place along the Black Sea in Constanta, Romania; it was the first exercise on the deliberate release on a biologic agent. A virus known as variola, but more commonly referred to as smallpox, which was officially declared eradicated in 1979 by the World Health Organization, was used.

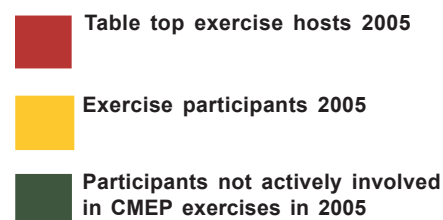
Six other countries share the Black Sea, which could lead to a quick spread of the disease from their ports.

An exercise such as this helps with the development of inter-ministerial, regional, and international cooperation and increase efficiency for those in charge of disaster response, said Paul Victor Dobre, state secretary of the Ministry of Administration and Home Affairs for Romania.

EMERGENCIES

Story by Andrew Stamer

CMEP Participants from 1994 to 2005



Kazakhstan

Uzbekistan

KYRGYZSTAN

Tajikistan

Afghanistan

This exercise helped with the standardization of activities of the responsible national

authorities through the creation of a common base necessary to the management of emergencies, he said.

The Central Asian States also collaborated this year during an exercise in Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan.

It was important to leaders in Kyrgyzstan to be chosen because each year they face natural calamities, said Bakir Tolchiev, the deputy minister of the Department of Ecology and Emergency Services.

"This year we have had four rain falls which entailed mud slides," he said, which displaced more than 20,000 people in some of the remote villages in the Tien Shan Mountains.

"The fact is today we have exercises sponsored by the Corps ... with one goal, the protection of people. At the present time you are involved with the aftermath of Katrina, but you decided to hold such an event in Central Asia, to help us with civil affairs," he said.

The mold that has been set up here will be the future for negotiations at the governmental level and be the basis for many Central Asian countries, Tolchiev said.

Tolchiev believes that this exercise, and similar follow up exercises, will equip the

government to help provide the

population

better response to emergency situations.

"It is very good that NATO and the Corps of Engineers have well established systems. We hope that we will be integrated into this system and in the future we will make our own proposal," he said.

By getting all of these countries together, it helps everyone involved learn different techniques for emergency response. No system is perfect and it is a chance for everyone involved to learn.

And learning from each other is an important aspect of CMEP, said Maj. Chip Parker, team chief for CENTCOM's Central and South Asia Disaster Preparedness.

Attending the CMEP exercise in Kyrgyzstan is one way that CENTCOM can help its regional partners develop better interagency disaster management strategies, he said.

"One of the biggest benefits is the GIS (Geographic Information System) because it's a very applicable and valuable tool in mapping disasters and disaster response," he said.

A tool CENTCOM hopes to use in Afghanistan to prepare for the spring floods.

"Afghanistan had the need and let it be known and we looked to the Corps of Engineers because of their expertise," Parker said.

Parker said the CMEP program could also benefit the African nations within CENTCOM.

"East Africa has great potential," Parker said. "What the Corps of Engineers is doing through the CMEP program is helping CENTCOM's theater security cooperation."